

Allowing for Walk-Ins

“Walk right in, sit right down...”

What is a “Walk-In”? Why is It Important?



In our quest to “Go for the Gold,” we must do what we can to make it as convenient as possible for participants receive their nutrition education and Food Instruments (FIs), which means ***allowing and supporting walk-ins***. This means you must *anticipate* that participants who do not have appointments *will* come into your WIC sites. *Accommodating* walk-ins is a WIC-culture adjustment, but it is a good business practice. We must shift our mind set to meet the needs of our clients and improve customer satisfaction. If the participant is there, why not serve her? The time it takes

to re-schedule or discuss why the participant does not have an appointment, we could have provided nutrition education, issued FIs, and sent the participant on her way. Plus, scheduling for walk-ins prevents staff from feeling overwhelmed or overloaded. Below are some tips you may use to allow for walk-ins.

Tips for Local Agencies

- ❁ Accept walk-ins all day and/or schedule set times for walk-ins. Staff will feel better about walk-ins and be more prepared if they are scheduled.
 - Schedule one appointment every 20 or 30 minutes in a special code that won’t normally be filled.
- ❁ Move staff from one site to another as needed to re-adjust the appointments-to-staff ratio.
- ❁ Over-book your appointment to compensate for “no-shows”.
- ❁ Check to see if the number of no-shows balances out the number of walk-ins and adjust appropriately.
- ❁ Assign a staff person to serve walk-ins, and if no walk-ins arrive, that person can make no-show calls.
- ❁ Have “make-up” days throughout the month, so that participants can feel comfortable coming in any time during those days.
- ❁ Consider offering GA classes that pertains to every category and offer them more frequently so that more walk-ins can readily get their secondary contact. Group education is a great way to serve more participants at the same time with less staff.
- ❁ Look at appointment schedules frequently (a least once or twice daily). If appointments are not filling up, change the appointment types to those which will fill.
- ❁ Advertise the availability of walk-in hours.
 - Post signs stating the days and hours when walk-ins are allowed.
 - Have the autodialer include a message about the availability of walk-ins.
 - Put stickers on the WIF
 - Stress that walk-ins are allowed during the no-show calls.
- ❁ If participant arrives as a walk-in, place her in an open appointment and assist her in a respectful manner.

- ❁ Discuss with staff the benefits of walk-ins. Get the staff in brainstorming ideas on how to make walk-ins work at your agency.
- ❁ Participate in the CWA list serve to get ideas from other agencies on how to allow for walk-ins.
- ❁ Try to streamline the appointments for all participants. If a walk-in participant speaks a different language and no staff speaking that language is available, still serve the participant by issuing FIs, however, do the certifications or classes the following month.
- ❁ Inform the participant how long the wait will be so that she knows what to expect.
- ❁ When a WIC site is busy or short staffed, get back to basics – WPM 410-20.1 minimum nutrition education requirements – provide the minimum required counseling session and provide follow-up information at the next appointment.
 - Determine if the participant must be certified, needs a secondary contact, or if she can be single issued FIs that month and be offered the contact the next month.
 - If the participant needs a re-certification, then try to fit in the participant.
 - If an applicant needs to be enrolled, screen her and provide her with a list of documents she will need for her next appointment.
- ❁ If a site is not busy, do the certification (or provide the secondary contact) and double or triple issue if possible.

Things to Consider

The walk-ins tips may not work for all sites, below are things to consider when scheduling:

- ❖ Be clear on your agency's FI Issuance Protocol. Staff should know when they can double and triple issue.
- ❖ Urban areas versus rural areas, what works in one location may not work in another.
- ❖ Be consistent month to month which sites are open which days and what hours, this way your participants become familiar with your schedule and can schedule around their WIC appointments.
- ❖ Considering adjusting staff and sites schedules -- have flexible lunch hours, have some sites open late, or allow staff to have the 4/10 work schedules.
- ❖ Cultural differences – know your population.
- ❖ How many appointments to schedule each day, keeping in mind walk-in possibilities.
- ❖ Use appointments-to-staff ratios as general guides, not rules. You must still take into account the time of day, the day of the week, the day of the month, weather conditions, etc.
- ❖ Count a “staff in training” only .75 FTE and spread out the “staffing in training” to different sites.
- ❖ Consider your RD and lactation specialist availabilities and how they are effected by walk-ins.
- ❖ Participants can refuse secondary nutrition education contacts. If a participant can not wait for a class, place an “R” in the nutrition education contact field and issue FIs as you would if the participant had attended the secondary contact.

